

# **Succumb**

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*Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art*

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## Succumb

The nature of being gentle, submissive, and demure has been instilled within me throughout my upbringing in North Carolina. It is said that the gentle nature of Southern ladies is something that will please the father and husband. Within the 21st century, women's rights and issues are being brought into the open and discussed more than they have been in the past, but the Southern social norms, which have shaped many young women's lives, continue to dwell in young girls' utopian fantasies of white picket fences, picture-perfect homes, and perfect marriages. My work draws from my personal anxieties and discomfort in treading through my adulthood, the institution of matrimony, and debilitating domestic spaces.

Through the use of domestic items—pillows, bed sheets, cushions, and architectural elements of the home—the work begins to create a domestic space, recognizable to the viewer as a place of comfort. Upon further inspection, the objects reveal their abjection and torment through grimy, glistening surfaces, soft visceral forms, or lines and striations evident of previous constriction. Violence and aggression occur at the intersection of the humanoid and the domestic object, driving the conversation of the work towards control and force, specifically within the confining, domestic setting of the home. Under the strong persuasion of rope, string or ribbon, one entity ultimately succumbs to the other's will in each of the works.

In the piece, *Sweet One*, the materials come together to bind not only the soft, humanoid form to the pillow, but also to bind a coupling of steel frames together. Inside this marriage of foam rope and steel, the pillow is crushed in between the two frames, which were made to resemble one another, but will never be able to seamlessly fit together—drawing parallels to human relationships and their inevitable lack of fulfillment. The softness of the foam rope disguises its harsh purpose of fastening and holding and creates a façade of gentility. It is this façade of the ideal that I am interested in deconstructing and reexamining, both in my work and personal reality.

In the deeply instilled culture that I inhabit, there is no strong fight that I can take part in, neither for nor against my role as a Southern woman. There is still a part of my inner self that believes in the utopia of white picket fences and perfect lives. Submitting to the institutions that metaphorically bind me is my current reality, and much like the sculptures that I create, I feel that I will eventually find myself succumbing to the force of another.

# Succumb

Emily J. Smith | MFA Thesis Defense







Grandparents, 1940



Age 5



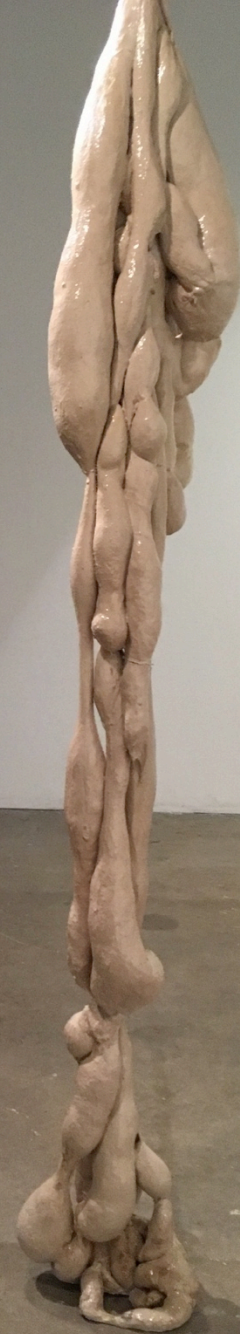


*Entrails*, installation view, 2015  
Unfired porcelain and stockings





*Entrails*, 2015  
Unfired porcelain and stockings







*Summer 94, 2015*

Porcelain cast clothing, welded clothes line, found construction materials





*Summer 94, detail, 2015*

Porcelain cast clothing, welded clothes line, found construction materials





*Grandmother, 2016*

Embroidery hoop, found pillow case, yarn, paraffin wax





*Grandmother*, detail, 2016

Embroidery hoop, found pillow case, yarn, paraffin wax



Eva Hesse

Untitled, 1969-1970



Untitled, 1966

# Louise Bourgeois





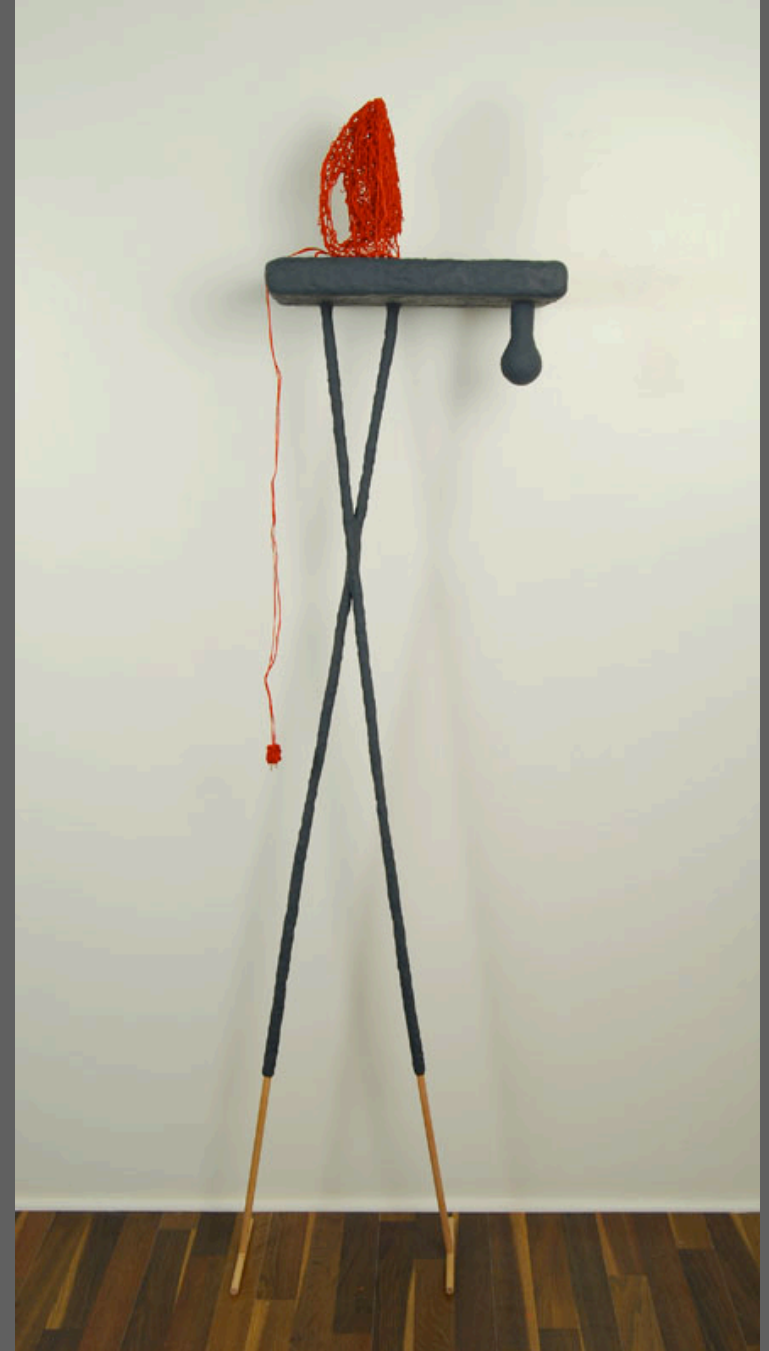
Sara Lucas



Titles Unknown



*When you are not here we have each other, except for him*



*Iron, 2009*





*Evelyn*, 2016  
Nylon, stoneware, rubber coating, latex, paraffin wax



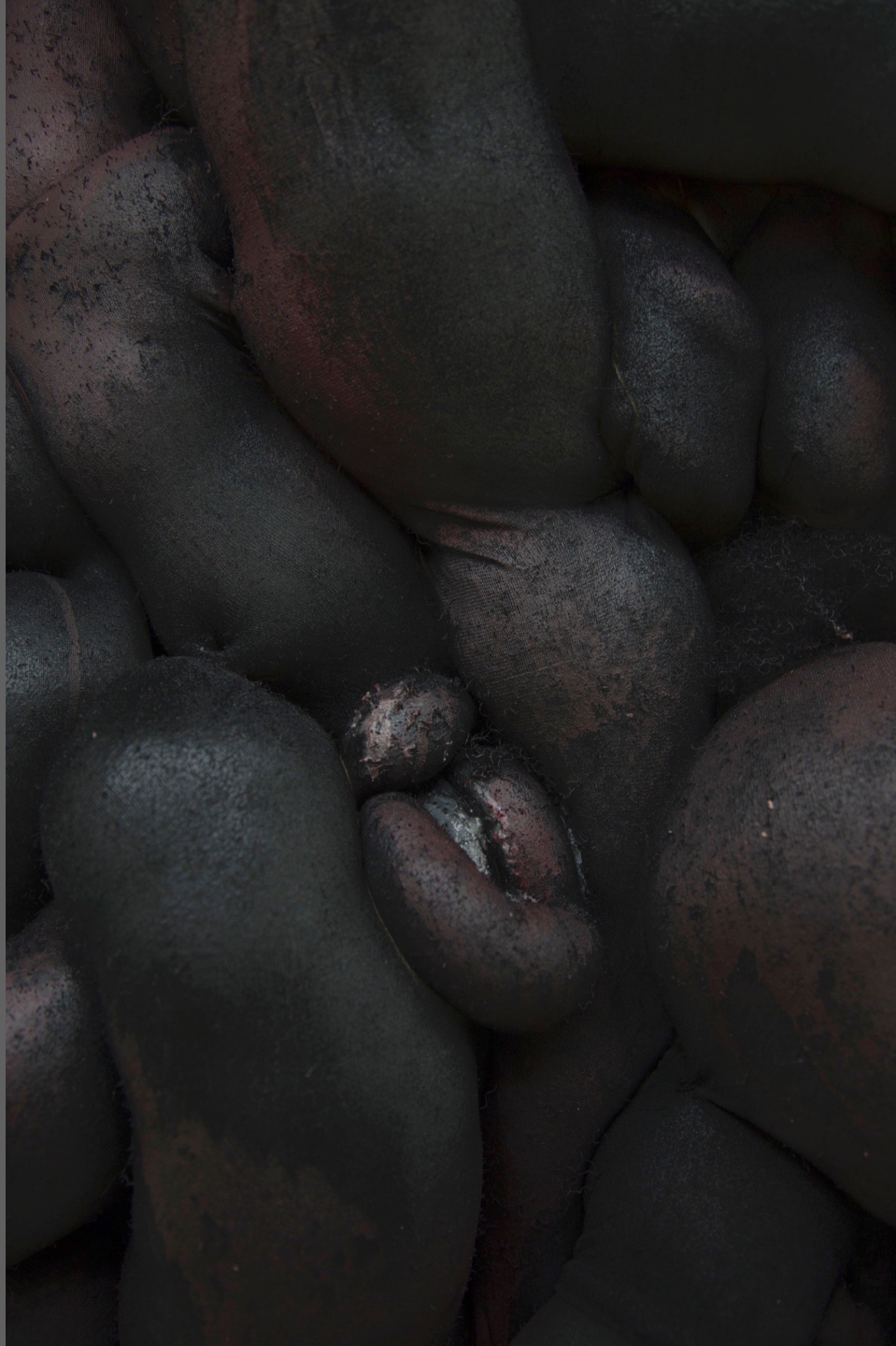


*Evelyn*, 2016



*Evelyn*, 2016





*Evelyn*, detail 2016





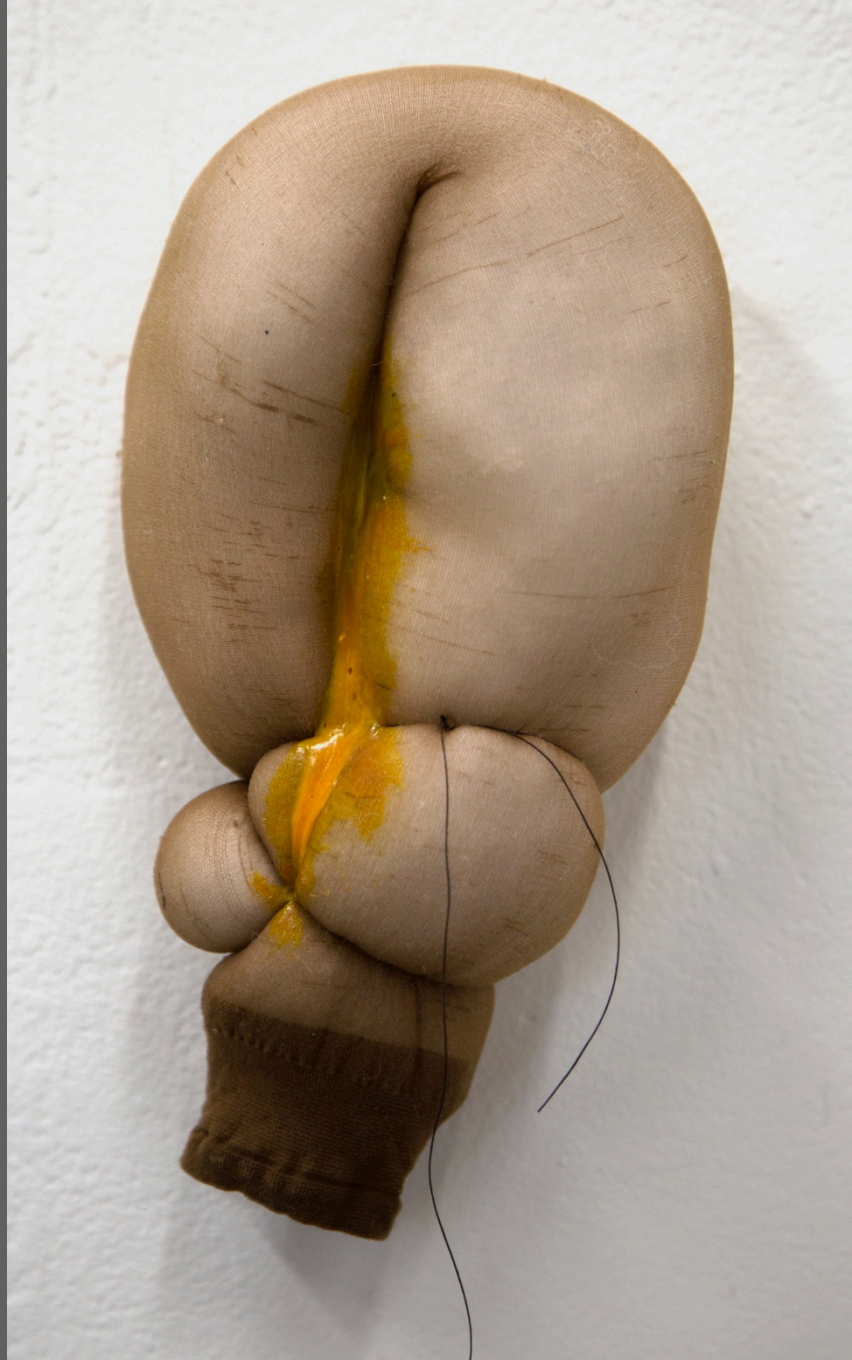
*Evelyn*, 2016

Nylon, stoneware, rubber coating, latex, paraffin wax



Untitled, 2017





*Yellow Love*, 2017  
Stocking, thread, yellow latex





Untitled, 2017

Foam, nylon, rubber, drywall compound





Untitled, 2017

Foam, nylon, rubber, drywall compound



THE JOHN AND JUNE ALLCOTT GALLERY

*Succumb*  
Emily J. Smith



*Succumb*, MFA Thesis Exhibition  
April 10-14, 2017





Installation view of *Succumb*





Installation View of *Succumb*, 2017









*Don't you worry, 2017*























*Don't you worry, 2017*









*Courtship, 2017*









*Courtship, 2017*





*Demure, 2017*













*Demure*, 2017





*Nestle, 2017*













*Nestle, 2017*





*Sweet One, 2017*













*Sweet One, 2017*









*Instinct, 2017*





*Instinct, 2017*





*Instinct, 2017*





Installation view of *Succumb*





*Mantle, 2017*





*Mantle, cluster 2, 2017*





*Mantle, cluster 2, 2017*





*Mantle, cluster 1, 2017*















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Thank you.